

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MILAN 00752 180609Z
ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MILAN 0752

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: IT, PINT
SUBJECT: PAVIA ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTION RESULTS MAY 14-15, 1978

REF: MILAN 0308

1. SUMMARY. PAVIA ELECTION RESULTS WERE AS SURPRISING AS THOSE ELSEWHERE WITH DC WINNING BIG, PCI LOSING BIGGER, AND SOCIALISTS REACHING UNPARALLELED 17 PERCENT IN CITY WHILE STANDING STILL IN PROVINCE. PCI PROVINCIAL SECRETARY TOLD US HIS PARTY'S SETBACK DUE IN PART TO COMMUNISITS' MORE MODERATE LINE BUT DENIED THAT LOSS WOULD TEMPT PCI TO CHANGE TO MORE EXTREMIST POSITIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. WE HAD BEEN AWAITING PAVIA ELECTION RETURNS WITH PARTICULAR INTEREST BOTH BECAUSE CITY HAD AGGRESSIVE LEFTIST ADMINISTRATION THAT MADE IT GOOD TEST CASE FOR ASSESSING VOTER ACCEPTANCE OF THAT KIND OF GOVERNANCE AND ALSO BECAUSE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, WHO WERE EXPECTED TO ADVANCE NATIONWIDE, APPEARED TO SUFFER FROM WEAK LEADERSHIP IN PAVIA. WE JUDGED THESE TO BE IMPONDERABLES THAT MADE PAVIA ELECTION OUTCOMES ESPECIALLY HARD TO PREDICT. JUST LAST WEEK, WE WERE TOLD MUCH THE SAME BY MILAN DC PROVINCIAL SECRETARY GIANSTEFANO FRIGERIO.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MILAN 00752 180609Z

HE CALLED PAVIA LEADERSHIP POOR AND SAID THAT THAT MILITATED AGAINST WHAT WOULD OTHERWISE ALMOST CERTAINLY BE SUBSTANTIAL DC ADVANCE THERE.

3. INSTEAD, PAVIA RESULTS MIRRORED THOSE ELSEWHERE. DC, FOR EXAMPLE, WENT FROM 33.5 PERCENT IN 1976 POLITICAL ELECTIONS TO 35.7 PERCENT IN PROVINCE, AND IN CITY FROM

32 PERCENT TO ALMOST 35 PERCENT. WITH PCI LOSSES, THAT HAD MADE DC BIGGEST PARTY IN CITY (5 PERCENTAGE POINTS AHEAD OF COMMUNISTS) AND BROUGHT IT TO WITHIN ONE POINT OF PCI IN PROVINCE.

4. EVEN BIGGER NEWS WAS DROP IN COMMUNIST VOTE. PCI LOST OVER FOUR POINTS IN PROVINCE WITH RESPECT TO 1976 AND ALMOST SIX POINTS IN CITY.

5. SOCIALISTS PROVIDED ANOTHER SURPRISE. NOT ONLY DID THEY FAIL TO FALL BACK IN PROVINCE AS MOST FELT THEY WOULD (PSI IN FACT GAINED 0.2 OF POINT) BUT IN CITY CLIMBED ALMOST FIVE FULL POINTS, FROM 12.3 TO 17.2. PSI CITY VICTORY MUST BE SEEN AS PERSONAL TRIUMPH FOR YOUNG CONTROVERSIAL PSI MAYOR ELIO VELTRI, WHOSE 3,000 PREFERENTIAL VOTES WERE HIGHER THAN ANY OTHER CANDIDATE. HE IS AGGRESSIVE LEFTIST WHOSE SCORN FOR DC IS ALMOST MATCHED BY HIS DISTRUST OF COMMUNISTS (REFTEL). FEELING OF COURSE IS MUTUAL, AND VELTRI HAS CONDUCTED HIS POLITICS BY ESTABLISHING HIGHLY PERSONALIZED RAPPORT WITH ELECTORATE AND RELYING ON COOPERATION WITH OTHER PARTIES ONLY TO MINIMAL EXTENT NECESSARY. WE OURSELVES HAD ONE DISAGREEABLE RUN-IN WITH VELTRI TWO YEARS AGO WHEN HE GAVE SIXTH FLEET BAND AND USIS DIRECTOR VERY COLD SHOULDER.

6. PCI PROVINCIAL SECRETARY TOLD US BY PHONE THAT THERE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MILAN 00752 180609Z

WAS NO DENYING PCI HAD SUFFERED SETBACK. DC ADVANCE HAD BEEN WHOLLY PREDICTABLE GIVEN ALREADY VERIFIED TENDENCY OF MODERATE VOTE TO COALESCE AROUND DC, TO WHICH MORO AFFAIR NOW ADDED. PSI SUCCESS IN CITY, HE ADDED, WAS DUE TO MAYOR VELTRI. BUT PCI LOSSES WERE REAL AND COULD NOT BE ASCRIBED ONLY TO SUCCESS OF OTHERS. ONE REASON WAS PROBABLY PCI MODERATION. THOSE WITHIN PARTY WHO HAD HOPED FOR STARTLING CHANGES AFTER GREAT PCI VICTORIES OF 1975 AND 1976 HAD BEEN DISAPPOINTED. NO DOUBT SOME WANTED PCI TO ADOPT HARDER LINE.

7. AND WOULD PCI NOW MOVE TO LEFT IN RESPONSE TO LOWER VOTE? SECRETARY SAID HE HOPED AND BELIEVED NOT. SERIOUS PARTY COULD NOT CHANGE POLICIES JUST BECAUSE IT HAD TAKEN LOSS. HE HAD SPOKEN ELECTION NIGHT WITH PCI HEADQUARTERS IN ROME AND BELIEVED OFFICIALS THERE FELT SAME WAY.

8. SECRETARY SAID HE HOPED DC WOULD NOT BE TEMPTED BY ITS VICTORY TO TRY TO WRIGGLE OUT OF PRESENT GOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH PCI. HE HOPED, IN FACT, THAT DC SUCCESS WOULD INCREASE PARTY'S CONFIDENCE AND MAKE IT MORE WILLING

TO COOPERATE WITH PCI. IF THAT HAPPENDED, PCI LOSS WOULD
HAVE SERVED GOOD PURPOSE IN TERMS OF INCREASING OVERALL
EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNMENT.

9. TO RETURN TO PAVIA, ELECTION RESULTS WILL NOT MEAN
END OF LEFTIST ADMINISTRATIONS SINCE SOCIALISTS ARE STILL
AGAINST RETURN TO CENTER LEFT FORMULA. BUT IT WILL MEAN
LARGE POWER SHIFT IN CITY ADMINISTRATION WITH COMMUNISTS
AS LOSERS. SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, WORD IN PAVIA WAS THAT
PCI INTENDED AFTER ELECTIONS TO USE PARTY'S PREPONDERANCE
IN CITY GIUNTA TO BOUNCE THE AMBITIONS AND IRRITATING
VELTRI FROM MAYORSHIP AND REPLACE HIM WITH COMMUNIST.
AFTER VELTRI'S LARGE PERSONAL SUCCESS, THAT MAY WELL BE
IMPOSSIBLE. PCI WILL HAVE TO GET USED TO BEING PAVIA
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 MILAN 00752 180609Z

CITY'S NUMBER TWO PARTY AFTER DC AND TO DEAL WITH PSI
GIUNTA PARTNER WHICH HAS COLLECTED BIGGEST SOCIALIST
VOTE IN ITALY IN CITY OF PAVIA'S SIZE.

9. WHETHER UNDER THESE CONDITIONS PAVIA PCI WILL BE
ABLE TO RESIST TEMPTATION TO SWING BACK TO LEFT IS
QUESTION COMMUNISTS WILL PRESUMABLY BE ASKING THEMSELVES
ALL OVER ITALY.FINA

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